



THE LOCAL HEALTH LINK

Stimulating Shorts from Frankfort

1998 Conference on the Future of the South

submitted by Rice C. Leach, MD, Commissioner; Viola Brown, ARNP; Marvin Miller, and Sylvia Cherry, Department for Public Health

"Just think, these are the things we have been saying all along" -- Viola Brown.

Staff in the Department for Public Health felt themselves fortunate to be attending the conference hosted by Governor Paul Patton at the elegant Seelbach Hotel in Louisville June 14-16. Our review of the preliminary agenda led us to expect we would hear a lot about economic development, and so we did. But with the opening address we began to feel at home with the conference's issues and themes, for

they are closely linked to public health.

The 1998 Conference on the Future of the South focused on three themes: economic development, healthy families and children, and southern culture and communities. Some of the overriding concerns of the conference--ones we in public health have also been addressing--are change, community, technology, education, and the family.

Change

"You see things as they are and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were and I say 'Why not?'"--Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson quoting George Bernard Shaw.

We in public health have consistently stressed the importance of working together through the process of change with its opportunities and risks. The changes we make must be based on

our vision for the future.

Change involves all of us at every level of an operation. Former University of Alabama president and now director of the Kettering Foundation, Dr. David Mathews quoted a comment made by a Kentuckian on the changes brought about by the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA): "We learned the fallacy of the assumption that we were going to revolutionize education in our state, and the only people who would have to change were the educators."

Community

"UJIMA. Ujima is the Swahili word for collective work and collective responsibility"--Angie Woodward, Leadership Kentucky.

Dr. Mathews addressed the importance of community in the South and the need for healthy civic engagement. This approach

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parallels what we in Kentucky public health have been discussing over the past few years: the need for health departments to move back into more community services.

Another important theme of Dr. Mathews was the need for clear productive human interactions that focus on the tasks at hand. In a later session of the conference this concept was reiterated by Dr. Michael Hooker, Chancellor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He called for changing the culture of our universities from an ivory tower mentality to a greater readiness to serve the state in whatever way the universities have the capacity to serve.

We develop strong community when people make a commitment to improve one little thing in their own little corner and when we develop the attitude that "if it's going to get any better, we are going to have to help." In strong communities small local groups make their own decisions. The key to effective communities is leadership. Communities must be full of leaders who are door openers. Poor leaders serve as mere gate keepers; whereas, leaders in successful communities reinforce people in decision-making.

"I've got to start pushing decisions down their way"--Alfred P. Slone, one of the founders of General Motors, president of GM in the 1920s, and an early management guru, on how to handle a significant problem that was stifling the company.

"Are we citizens or taxpayers? A citizen picks up a piece of paper off the sidewalk. A taxpayer looks at the paper and complains about the lack of government services"--Angie Woodward with Leadership Kentucky.

Technology

"Technology is a tool for all of us, and it will be an ever-evolving tool kit"--Governor Cecil Underwood, West Virginia.

Technology will help us work more efficiently, help us analyze the important health status indicators in our communities, and also challenge us to be lifelong learners. Surveillance is an important component of public health, and technology will help us do a better job of surveillance in the future.

Dr. Michael Hooker of University of North Carolina sees a significant difference between education and mere training. While specialized training for specific skills is very important in our diverse economy, the most important skill in each individual is the skill of critical thinking. Through the process of critical thinking we come up with the creativity for new ideas that will ultimately contribute to advances in every area of our lives, whether technology, economic development, or community harmony. Hooker does not believe in focusing on narrow technical education. The study of other disciplines, such as literature, produces the critical analytical thinking skills necessary for creating the technology of a just-in-time inventory system, for example.

Education

"I have been running from being naked in that alley all my life"--Mario Moreno.

Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education Dr. Mario Moreno told about his Mexican-American grandfather, who could not

speak English, but who spoke only Spanish. When Moreno was five years of age, his grandfather began to tell him how to break out of the poverty of their lives: "They can beat you up, rob you, and leave you in a dark alley naked, but if you have education, you can get it all back." Moreno told his audience: "Ladies and gentleman, I have been running from being naked in that alley all my life."

"Education is one of strongest ways to break the cycle of poverty. It is our path to prosperity"--Former Kentucky Governor Martha Layne Collins.

Yet a high percentage of Southerners are unable to participate in our region's booming economy because of lack of education to qualify them.

Governor Paul Patton remarked over and over again that education is everything. "Our true opportunity to make a quantum leap is in early childhood development ... We must invest in the future and forgo instant gratification."

We in public health are in a position to be a part of this significant educational initiative from our governor. Health care providers have realized that there is a correlation between educational level and health status and that education does not begin and end within the confines of school and health clinic walls. What we need to do is increase our commitment to health education in our communities. The opportunity is upon us especially in the areas where our clinical activities are declining.

Michael Hooker noted that 75 percent of our children will not graduate from college, yet our secondary curriculum still assumes they will. Such a statistic provides a useful lesson for

public health, for we do not want to remain out of touch with our constituents, but want to provide them with what they need where they live in their communities.

Dr. Hooker deplored the brain drain the South suffers. He advocates a bumper sticker that would read: "Be environmental friendly: Protect our educated children and their good ideas. Keep them in the South."

"The empires of the future are the empires of the mind"--Pedro Rosello, Governor of Puerto Rico, quoting Sir Winston Churchill.

The Family

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see"--Dr. Betty Siegel, former coal miner's daughter from Harlan, Kentucky, now President of Kennesaw University in Georgia.

Conference speakers consistently emphasized their belief that family is the most important institution of the society. Unfortunately, schools, technology, and change often adversely affect families. In some cases, families need special and additional help, offering a timely opportunity for local health departments to provide assistance. Some relevant examples are our Resource Mothers Project and, in a broader sense, health education that assists parents with parenting. Other activities guide our adolescents toward responsible decision-making, such as deciding to abstain from use of tobacco or postpone sexual involvement.

"Stacks of white plates gleam on the buffet table. Three hundred people go through the buffet line. The one person who picks up a dirty plate is none other than ... you guessed it"--

Dr. Rice Leach, Commissioner of the Department of Public Health. The message here is not to slam the restaurant or to close it down but to tell them so they can make all the money they can in a safe and healthy manner.

"The secret of the amazing size and longevity of sequoia trees is that their roots go out and embrace other sequoia roots. One never sees a sequoia growing alone in the forest. They embrace each other and thus stand tall and endure. In a community the only way we can prosper is to recognize our interdependency with one another"--Dr. Betty Siegel. This concept sounds remarkably like Dr. Rice Leach's efforts to encourage health departments to view themselves as, and to act as, interdependent community resources.

Implications and Opportunities for Public Health in Kentucky

Change, community, technology, early childhood development, and family. These were significant themes all through the conference. Community, family, and children are the reason we exist. We are here to serve each of them. Change and technology. By the time this century ends in eighteen months, we will have written the book on how to manage change. With any luck, the technology of improved information systems will make it easier for us to do a better job with what we have. The overriding issues of this conference are absolutely compatible with the mission of public health in Kentucky and the challenges we are facing. The trick is for us to identify the links at the local level and to enlist the appropriate people and groups to work on strengthening them. We must find what works best so we can get on with making life

better for all of us. Truly these are "the things we have been saying all along."

ACH Anecdotes

Henry County Hosts Kentucky Safe Kids:

"Four out of five. It's a shame, but four out of five child car seats are not installed the right way." David Marlette, DPH Health Program Representative.

With these appalling numbers in mind **Kentucky Safe Kids** works to see that all car seats are properly installed so children will be protected. On June 13 a partnership made up of Safe Kids, the North Central Rural Office of Traffic Safety, and the Browning Pontiac-GMC Dealership held a **Child Safety Seat Check-Up** in Eminence. Elizabeth Huedecker and Vicky Carpenter with the North Central District Health Department based in Shelbyville were those who joined with other volunteers from Henry County.

Three other check-ups have been held--in Lexington-Fayette County and in the Louisville area, but this was the first Safe Kids event held in a rural setting.

The volunteers in Eminence felt the day was a great success. The team checked sixteen child seats and gave away ten seats free of charge. Volunteers identified seven defective seats based on recalls from the manufacturers. One seat was removed because of damage caused by a crash. Two of the donated seats went to children in vehicles with no child restraint at all.

Safe Kids plans to hold more clinics throughout the state. David Marlette is a strong advocate for Safe Kids.

He commented, "This is a great way to get the message out on injury prevention. The more we can meet with the public to educate them about child safety, the safer our children will be."

*-submitted by Sylvia Cherry,
Department for Public Health*

Lab Lines

CHS Lab Director Dr. Thomas E. Maxson Dies
Memorial scholarship fund established

Funeral services for Dr. Thomas Edward Maxson were held at 2:00 p.m. July 14 at Blackburn & Ward Funeral Home, 161 Broadway, Versailles. Visitation was held at the funeral home from 4:00-8:00 p.m. July 13, 1998.

Dr. Maxson had been Division Director of Laboratory Services for the Department for Public Health since 1987. Prior to that position he was Director of Environmental Laboratories for the Tennessee Department of Health and Environment from 1981 to 1987. He had worked for the Tennessee Department for Public Health since 1972.

Maxson earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology in 1969 and a master's degree in biology in 1977 from Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. He earned a doctorate degree in public health in 1981 from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

Contributions in Dr. Maxson's memory may be made to the Dr. Thomas Maxson Scholarship Fund, c/o APHL, 1211 Connecticut Ave, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.
- excerpted from an article in the

July 13, 1998 issue of "The Pipeline"

PHPS Passages

E. COLI OUTBREAK TRIGGERS CONCERN:
Sanitation methods focus of scrutiny as officials try to determine cause of illness.

The pool industry is calling last month's *E. coli* outbreak in a popular kiddie pool in Atlanta an isolated incident. Seventeen children from five states became ill after playing in one of the pools at the White Water theme park.

At issue is sanitation - specifically chlorine levels in the pool's cleaning system - which may not have been strong enough to kill the *E. coli* 0157:H7 strain that entered the pool following defecation by an infected child, health experts said.

David Karmol, NSPI government relations director, said any judgment or blame regarding the pool's sanitation system is premature. "It's not clear what the vector of transmission was," Karmol said. "You can't tell thus far whether the wading pool was improperly sanitized or whether that's where the kids even contracted the disease."

Karmol said NSPI is awaiting official word from the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to determine whether the pool was properly chlorinated and, if it was, how the bacteria survived. "If that's the scenario, then we have a problem," Karmol said. "Nothing from published reports [on the incident] thus far supports that fact."

Cobb County Public Health

spokesperson Tammy Hamilton said that, regardless of the chlorine levels in the pool, most sanitizing systems can take up to an hour to kill all types of bacteria. "We don't believe any levels of chlorine would have affected the outcome positively," she said.

Dr. Roy Vore, a microbiologist with Wilmington, Delaware-based Zeneca, Inc., a manufacturer of pool and spa sanitizers, agreed. "An EPA-approved chlorine and bromine sanitation device will not kill bacteria instantly," Vore said. "It can take a couple of minutes, which is still a very short amount of time."

Despite the relatively small window of opportunity for the bacteria to exist, the fact that this was the first reported transmission of *E. coli* in chlorinated water fueled public apprehension.

News reports about the outbreak triggered calls from concerned parents to parks across the country. "We've certainly had an increase in the number of people seeking reassurances that we have all our safety measures in place," said Timothy Chanaud, spokesperson for San Jose, California-based Raging Waters.

Chanaud said Raging Waters has increased its "vigilance" on all safety matters, and added the industry and public should not be alarmed. "There is no reason why people should be concerned about *E. coli* in a pool," Chanaud said. "It's right up there with getting hit by an asteroid."

Meanwhile, White Water has implemented rules requiring young children to wear plastic pants and has installed a \$50,000 computerized system to track water quality. "The chlorine [level] is so high now, we're getting complaints about swimsuits

bleaching," park spokesperson Deedie Dowdle told the Associated Press. "We're overcompensating."

HOW TO COMBAT *E. COLI*:

According to the World Waterpark Association, based in Lenexa, Kansas, there are various possible avenues of transmission of the *E. coli* bacteria in and around a pool. The bacteria, although rare, can be found on ladder handles, locker doors, around the snack bar, on garbage cans and on human hands, among other areas.

To prevent the spread of the bacteria, Alison Osinski, Ph.D., from San Diego-based Aquatic Consulting Services recommends that, in addition to monitoring proper chemical levels and bacterial growth in a pool and not permitting diaper changing at poolside, swimmers should use the toilet before entering the pool, wash their hands with soap and hot water, or take a hot shower (sans swimsuit) before entering the pool.

Persons who have had diarrhea should avoid swimming in a pool for two weeks. If there is a fecal accident in the pool, Osinski said the pool should be closed for 24 hours and these steps taken:

- ☞ After the solid fecal matter is removed, the pool skimmer net, leaf rake or vacuum equipment used to remove the fecal matter should be thoroughly disinfected.
- ☞ The free-chlorine residual should be raised to 20 parts per million and maintained for a minimum of nine hours.
- ☞ The pH level in the pool should be between 7.2 and 7.4 to increase the percentage of hypochlorous acid formation.
- ☞ All filters should be backwashed and disinfected with a solution of 20

parts of water to 1 part of 10 percent to 15 percent sodium hypochlorite (liquid pool chlorine) before reopening the pool.

For small wading pools and spas, Osinski recommends the above steps plus draining the pool or spa and scrubbing the shell and filters with liquid pool chlorine.

- reprinted with permission from Jules Field, Pool & Spa News, Volume 37, Number 13, July 8, 1998

Staff Spotlight

HEALTH FAIR: The Martin County Health Department and Rite Aid of Inez, Kentucky co-sponsored a Health Fair on Saturday, June 6, 1998 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. During this time around 70 participants took advantage of the Health Fair and received free blood pressures, hemoglobins, blood sugar tests, pulse readings, cholesterol and lipid profiles, plus counseling and literature. Everyone was pleased with the services and expressed an interest for future health fairs.

The Martin County staff providing the services were:

Melanie Adams, R.N.
Greta Blackburn, R.N.
Ida Faye Goble, S.S.C.
Deborah Ramey, WIC Coordinator
Jean Ward, Director
Phyllis Campbell, R.N.
Glenda Grayson, Sr. Cl. Asst.
Robin Dennison, Sr. S.S.A.
Sharon Jordan, S.S.A.
- submitted by the staff of the Martin County Health Department

Training Tidbits

HOLD THE DATE: Coming to a conference center near you is the 'Southern Communities for Tobacco Free Kids: A Videoconference for

Youth Leaders'. It is scheduled for August 11, 1998 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A day long distance learning experience for leaders working with youth and youth coalitions. The format includes presentations by nationally known experts as well as information on state and local programs. Mark your calendars and plan to attend. Locations in your area are presently being secured and a complete listing of all sites along with registration information will be forwarded to you shortly. Any questions, please call Todd Warnick at 502-564-7996.

Video/Audio Tapes ALERT: If you have any outstanding video or audio tapes on loan for more than three weeks, please return them to me at the address given in the Editor's Note. Thank you for your cooperation.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Please submit articles, staff spotlight nominees, or suggestions for the newsletter to:

Sandy Williams, Editor
DPH - Training Branch
275 East Main St.
Frankfort, KY 40621
E-mail:
sandy.williams@mail.state.ky.us
502-564-4990
502-564-4553 (FAX)